



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Senator the Hon Penny Wong**

*Minister for Climate Change and Water*

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## **QUEENSLAND WATER BUYBACK FOR MURRAY-DARLING RIVERS TO OPEN NEXT MONTH**

The Rudd Government today announced a new tender to purchase water in the Queensland section of the Murray-Darling Basin to return to our rivers.

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said the tender will be the first part of a \$350 million commitment to purchase water in Queensland announced at last month's Council of Australian Governments meeting.

"The Rudd Government started purchasing water earlier this year with a \$50 million tender securing 35 billion litres in water entitlements which means rivers and wetlands will get a greater share of water when it is available," Senator Wong said.

"After 12 years of inaction under the previous government, we are the first Federal Government to enter the water market to tackle over-allocation in the Murray-Darling Basin."

Senator Wong said the impacts of drought and climate change were hitting hard across the Murray-Darling Basin, with critical human needs for towns and cities relying on the Murray for drinking water taking first priority in the southern Basin.

"In the southern Basin in particular, there is very little water available for the rivers or for farmers due to continued low inflows and the need to make sure we can meet critical human needs."

Senator Wong said that while there was no easy solution for the Murray-Darling Basin, purchasing water in Queensland would benefit wetlands and rivers in the northern Basin and increase flows down the Darling River.

In wetter years, increased flows to the Darling River will make their way down to the Murray River. However, at the moment the Darling River is so dry that increased flows to that river are unlikely to reach the Murray River.

"Unfortunately, there is currently just not enough water in the system to do everything we want to do," Senator Wong said.

Senator Wong said the new tender process would be informed by feedback from a Stakeholder Consultative Committee established to provide advice on the first round of water purchase.

"The tender process is an effective way to purchase water for rivers and wetlands at a price which is acceptable to both the buyer – the Australian community – and the seller."

Senator Wong said the tender process is scheduled to open next month.

Senator Wong has written to the New South Wales and Queensland Governments seeking that they urgently put in place administrative arrangements to secure the environmental flows as they move downstream.

“This is very important to ensure that the water purchased for the river stays in the river, rather than being taken by other users downstream,” Senator Wong said.

Funding for the Queensland water purchase is part of the \$3.1 billion *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin* program which aims to improve the health of the Basin’s rivers by buying back water entitlements.

Further information on the Queensland buyback including program guidelines will be available next month at: [www.environment.gov.au/water](http://www.environment.gov.au/water). The buyback will be widely advertised prior to commencement.